

**TOWN OF CHESTER
PLANNING COMMISSION**

**February 1, 2016
Minutes**

PRESENT: Tom Bock; Naomi Johnson; Harry Goodell; Tom Hildreth; Randal Wiggin;
Claudio Veliz as alternate

VISITORS: Julie Hance; Michael Normyle;

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairman Bock.

1. **TOWN PLAN REVIEW:**

Tom Bock explained the evening and the purpose of the meeting. The Planning Commission introduced themselves. Tom Bock introduced Jason Rasmussen from the Regional Planning Commission as well as Bob Flint from the Springfield Regional Development Corporation.

Bob Flint and Jason Rasmussen explained the need of Economic Development in the State and within our communities. Jason Rasmussen explained that there is a website available that will contain the information relative to the Town Plan updates.

David Pisha, the Town Manager presented his ideas. A copy of the notes are attached to the minutes. He stated that Economic Development needs to include more than just jobs created in Chester. It needs to also include all socio-economic aspects of a community. Any plans should also have a positive effect on the region.

Rick Paterno provided his background in the corporate world. He further presented his ideas relative to the growth of Chester. He agreed with Mr. Pisha that the planning of the community needs to be focused around the greater good of the community as a whole. Rick Paterno expressed his concern that the implementation of the plan is critical and it must be done early on in the process. He stated his opinion that economics drive everything and that the town needs to enhance what it already has. Rick Paterno stated that it is his opinion that the 3 major areas in town are The Gateway down at The Legion, the Depot from Route 11 to Stone Village; and The Common. Companies will only be attracted to a town that has a strong economic base. Rick Paterno also stated that the town cannot afford to allow economic development to change the character of the town. David Pisha noted that a zip code survey will be critical along with a marketing plan. Signage placed around the time will be vital. Rick Paterno also noted that it would be nice to see a ladies clothing store on The Common and businesses that are attractive on The Green.

In response to Bill Lindsay, Bob Flint explained the actions taken in Windsor to better market their community. Windsor spent \$5,000.00 along with the State to create a web advertisement of their community.

Margi Graf stated that Vermont is a tourism industry. She explained that the Chamber of Commerce creates a regional guidebook for surrounding towns. Margi Graf stated that she is looking for photos and events to put into their guidebook. She emphasized that the communities need to work together to capture the tourism for the towns. Margi Graf stated that the annual meeting is coming up and will have some good guest speakers.

Michael Alon stated his opinion that Chester is a hidden gem. He noted that there is not enough signage or recognition as to where visitors are. He also stated that he would like to see more events on The Green. Michael Alon stated that he would like to see The Common closed for traffic with tables for sitting and visiting. Michael Alon gave his opinion that tax incentives and assistance with taxes would help small businesses within the town. He also noted that there has to be business unity. Michael Also also suggested that the website is a large part of marketing the town.

David Pisha stated that events are a huge marketing tool for a community. People want to be here and are happy.

Barre Pinske stated that he moved to Chester because of Route 103. He noted that second home owners and people on vacation are who buy art. Barre Pinske stated that he has received loans from the town and SRDC. He said that Margi Graf has helped to market his carving festival. Barre Pinske stated that he has been advertising for Chester and trying to convince people and businesses to move to town. He further stated that town government needs to support local businesses.

In discussing ways to get jobs in town, Rick Paterno suggested modeling New York's ideas of economic zones. This would include offering tax incentives and investment opportunities to incoming business. The group agreed that The Gateway by the Legion, the Depot area and The Green are areas that need to be focused on. Rick Paterno stated that Manchester has a tourist tax which may be a way for Chester to fund an initiative. Bob Flint stated that this is a local option tax. Michael Alon stated that he feels that the town needs to actually take action.

Michael Normyle stated that a thought might be to have a local police officer direct some traffic over Church Street to get traffic to flow into The Green area. Jason Rasmussen can provide the traffic counts and what is the trend of traffic flow.

Work force and demographics. Michael Alon stated that the town needs to create a better workforce. Barre Pinske stated that he has no issues finding people to work for him. He thinks that there needs to be more jobs created. Rick Paterno stated that sustainability of each business and increase revenue are the needs. David Pisha stated that the schools need to be more active in getting high school students into these local businesses.

Discussion ensued regarding traffic patterns and the effect that the new Jiffy Mart will have on the traffic flow. The suggestion of improved signage at all entrances to town is very important in letting people know that they are entering Chester.

Tom Hildreth discussed public transportation. He stated that the public transportation network is not what it used to be. Tom Hildreth also discussed The Current and its deficiencies in providing transportation.

Tom Hildreth questioned the happenings with VTel and their pole location. Barre Pinske stated that the pole is being installed in his backyard. This will provide internet service to more of the community. Dan Cote stated that there is a box on the Inn that provides free WiFi to The Green area.

Michael Alon suggested painting lines along Route 11 in front of Inn Victoria, down along the Moon Dog, in front of the Whiting Library which will direct more people to park within the town. Rick Paterno reminded people of Steve Cecil's comments that parking is vital to the establishment of a community. He feels that the town needs to help out.

How do we take care of what we have. Barre Pinske stated that he feels that it is a cultural issue. Michael Alon stated that there is a perception that the local shops are too expensive. Dan Cote stated that tourism is who Chester is.

Diane Holme stated that the Town Plan reads well but it is not usable. She stated that she would like the Town Plan to be more specific and more regulatory. She stated that she would like the Planning Commission to look forward. Claudio Veliz reviewed in summary the changes in the Unified Development Bylaws.

A suggestion was made to utilize the field coming into town as a location to house events every weekend. He suggested that instead of adding another Farmer's Market, there needs to be something different.

Jason Rasmussen explained that he will take the comments received and work with the Planning Commission to create a draft Economic Development Chapter.

2. SET DATE FOR NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting was set for Monday, February 15, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.

3. ADJOURN:

A motion was made by Claudio Veliz to adjourn. Seconded by Naomi Johnson. There being no further business at this time, the meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

Julie Hance
Planning Director

Thomas Bock
Chairman of the Planning
Commission